

Committee on Resources

Testimony

Subcommittee on Water and Power

Tuesday, June 24, 1997

1334 Longworth HOB, 2:00 P.M.

**Statement of Kevin Smith
provided on behalf of
Governor John Kitzhaber
of the State of Oregon
before the Subcommittee on Water and Power
of the Committee on Resources
regarding H.R. 1400**

June 24, 1997

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Kevin Smith, Director of Federal Affairs in the Washington, D.C. office of Governor John Kitzhaber of Oregon. I am pleased to be here today to make a statement in support of the HR 1400.

HR 1400 authorizes the Bureau of Reclamation to participate in a water conservation project with the Tumalo Irrigation District located in central Oregon on the Deschutes River and Tumalo Creek. I am testifying today on behalf of Oregon's Governor, John Kitzhaber, in support of HR 1400 and the Tumalo project.

Simply put, this project will transform the water delivery system of the Tumalo Irrigation District from a series of inefficient, open canals into a sealed, pressurized pipeline which will serve the water users of the district while saving nearly 35,000 acre feet of water each year. The conserved water realized from this change will be used to provide more reliable service to district customers, and to return water to the Deschutes River and Tumalo Creek to be permanently dedicated to enhancing instream flows which will provide an array of public benefits.

Instream flows which will be guaranteed by the District's voluntary relinquishment of a portion of its water rights as part of this project are dramatic--equaling approximately 30 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the Deschutes River, and 20 cfs in the Tumalo Creek. These amounts will increase average summer flows currently experienced in the Deschutes River below its confluence with Tumalo Creek by about 150 percent. It will also guarantee that water will flow in the otherwise over-appropriated Tumalo Creek throughout the summer. This is water that is badly needed in stream to support important fish runs, extensive recreational uses which are an important part of the region's economy, and riparian zone functions which are critical to maintaining the health of the watershed.

2 Governor Kitzhaber and Oregon's natural resource agencies are working as partners with the Tumalo Irrigation District to identify and pursue funding assistance that is necessary to making this project a reality. Line item appropriations, low interest loans, and creation of partnerships with public interest groups and

Oregon business interests are all being pursued. The Governor is also working with the Oregon Legislature to refine the State's Conserved Water Statute to ensure that the in stream benefits from conservation projects like this one are maximized and guaranteed in perpetuity for the public.

In short, this conservation project provides the public with a unique opportunity to return a substantial amount of cool, clean water which has already been allocated for consumptive uses back in stream to support a growing number of public benefits. These rivers are treasured by Oregonians, and this opportunity is unlike any other that has presented itself in recent memory.

Thank you for inviting me to testify on this important matter.

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